

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: OCCUPANCY TAX COORDINATION

DATE: AUGUST 1, 2013

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS KENNY
 MERLINO
 BENTLEY
 CONOVER
 FRASIER

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

SUPERVISORS DICKINSON
 MASON

OTHERS PRESENT:

KATE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR OF TOURISM
MICHAEL R. SWAN, COUNTY TREASURER
KEVIN GERAGHTY, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
AMANDA ALLEN, DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD
FRANK THOMAS, BUDGET OFFICER
SUPERVISORS MONTESI
 STRAINER
 TAYLOR
 WESTCOTT
 WOOD
KEVIN MARKHAM, RAMADA INN
FRED AUSTIN, FORT WILLIAM HENRY
MICHAEL CONSUELO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LAKE GEORGE
 REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & CVB
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*
THOM RANDALL, *THE ADIRONDACK JOURNAL*
SARAH MCLENITHAN, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Kenny called the meeting of the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee to order at 10:30 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Conover, seconded by Mrs. Frasier and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Commencing the agenda review, Mr. Kenny advised the first item was the Report on Revenues from Michael Swan, County Treasurer, who distributed a handout to the Committee members, a copy of which is on file with the minutes. Mr. Swan apprised the revenues collected through July 26, 2013 was \$884,099.11, an increase of \$40,459.08 or 4.58%. He pointed out the Designated Reserve for 2013 totaled \$524,233.88 with \$500,000 of that being the minimum amount set for the reserve.

Mr. Swan apprised page two of the handout depicted the Occupancy Tax disbursements to the Municipalities of Warren County. He stated pages three and four referred to the total amount of bed tax collected, as well as a detailed listing of the expenditures. He informed the Committee the majority of revenue was not received until after June 30th; therefore, he advised, it was necessary to carry funds over from the prior year to ensure there was a sufficient amount of funding to encompass the expenditures for the first portion of the year.

Mr. Swan noted over the past two years more funds had been expended than received. He cautioned if this pattern continued, the reserve fund would be depleted. Mr. Kenny pointed out the reserve fund fluctuated from year to year and Mr. Swan concurred this was a valid statement. Mr. Conover commended Mr. Swan for the report presented.

Mr. Montesi questioned whether there were any delinquent accounts and Mr. Swan replied affirmatively. He pointed out that he felt over the past 1.5 years they had identified all of the businesses that should be collecting and remitting occupancy tax; however, he said, he would be conducting random audits to ensure the correct amounts were collected. He explained that the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance had released to the Treasurer's Office the sales tax collection program they used; therefore, he advised, he was able to identify a few businesses that he felt had large discrepancies between the amount of sales tax they collected for the year and the amount of occupancy tax they paid. Mr. Kenny apprised he felt conducting random audits was an excellent idea.

The next item on the agenda, Mr. Kenny advised, concerned action items. He stated the American Legion Baseball, Coopers Cave Tournament was cancelled in June due to inclement weather; therefore, he said, the \$1,000 awarded was not used. Since the money had not been expended, Mr. Kenny noted that no action was necessary and the funds would remain in the Occupancy Tax budget.

Mr. Kenny suggested tabling the request from the Village and Town of Lake George for \$50,000 in occupancy tax funding until the next Committee meeting, as there was no one in attendance from either Municipality to explain the request.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Conover and carried unanimously to table the request from the Village and Town of Lake George until the next Committee meeting as outlined above.

The next item on the agenda, Mr. Kenny remarked, referred to a request from the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce to receive the \$25,000 in Occupancy Tax awarded to them in advance rather than on a reimbursement basis for the upgrades made to the Exit 17 Information Center. He said that he had informed Michael Consuelo, Executive Director, Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce & CVB, that he had no issue with this; however, he pointed out, since then he learned from the County Attorney that this was not legal. He extended privilege of the floor to Mr. Consuelo to further explain the request.

Mr. Consuelo advised that the Chamber had hoped the funds would be allotted to them in advance, as the work had already commenced on the Information Center and they were experiencing cash flow issues. He said if it was determined the funds could not be advanced it would delay certain improvements; however, he said, they would keep moving forward.

He stated the Information Center was averaging 140 visitors per day and thus far, positive feedback was received with regards to the improvements made. He said the goal was to make the Information Center more welcoming to visitors, as well as providing them with the materials necessary to become more knowledgeable about the services and attractions available in Warren County. He thanked the Committee for awarding the funds to them and reiterated if the funds could not be advanced it would merely delay some of the proposed modifications.

Mr. Merlino questioned if there were any stipulations on what they could spend the money on and Mr. Kenny replied in the negative. Mr. Merlino suggested spending money on less expensive items to begin with, such as painting and office equipment and then submitting requests for reimbursement. Mr. Consuelo advised they had painted, ordered office supplies,

tv monitors for video displays and a touch screen kiosk. He said they would like to display on the posters of the Warren County Towns currently being exhibited along the second floor hallway of the Municipal Center, on the exterior of the building.

As there was no further business to come before the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee, on motion made by Mrs. Frasier and seconded by Mr. Conover, Mr. Kenny adjourned the meeting at 10:42 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah McLenithan, Legislative Office Specialist